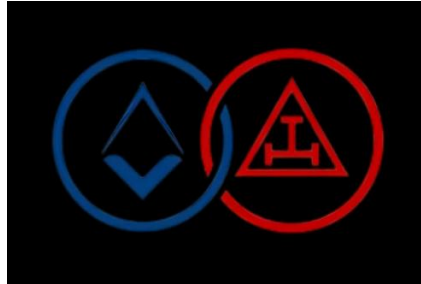


Why The Royal Arch.

'It is declared and pronounced that pure Antient Masonry consists of three degrees, and no more, viz. those of the Entered Apprentice, the Fellow Craft, and the Master Mason, including the Supreme Order of the Holy Royal Arch.' Duke of Sussex, Grand Master, 1813.



WE ENCOURAGE ALL FREEMASONS TO READ THIS ARTICLE.

(The Learning and Development Team)

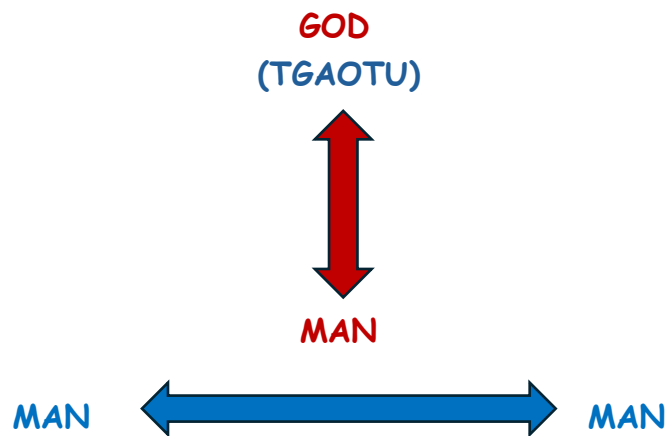
Freemasonry takes the participant on a journey of personal development and discovery transforming the 'Rough Ashlar' that sits on the Junior Warden's pedestal into that 'Smooth Ashlar' that sits on the Senior Warden's pedestal. The 'Smooth Ashlar' is incomplete without the knowledge gained in the Royal Arch.

Key Reasons to Join the Royal Arch.

Based on the analysis in "The Operative Soul," (The Square Magazine) here are the key reasons why a Master Mason would need to complete his development by entering the Royal Arch, summarized in a clear and concise format:

For a Master Mason, the Royal Arch degree is not an optional side-story but the essential and intended climax of the entire Masonic journey. The primary reasons for completing this step are:

1. The tragedy of loss (part 1) is transformed into a saga of hope and restoration (part 2)
2. The recovered "true Word" and what it represents.
3. The shift from man's relationship to man "horizontal" to man's relationship to God, 'The Great Architect of the Universe', "vertical".
4. The context that gives all prior symbolism its ultimate meaning.



1. Narrative and Allegorical Completion: From a Tragic Cliff-hanger to a Complete Saga

- In the Master Mason Degree (**The "Before"**): The Mason experiences a powerful and moving drama that ends in tragedy. The master architect, the keeper of the secrets, is murdered. The central secret, the genuine Omnific Word, is lost. While he is raised and given a substitute word, the story is fundamentally unresolved. He is left with a void, a promise of "further light" that the degree itself does not deliver. It is like reading the first half of a great epic; you have the setup, the conflict, and the loss, but not the resolution or the ultimate triumph.
- In the Royal Arch (**The "What He Gets"**): The Mason receives the second, and arguably more profound, half of the story. The Royal Arch narrative directly addresses the loss from the Third Degree. It is the story of exile, return, and diligent labour leading to the *recovery* of that which was lost. What he gets is narrative resolution. The tragedy of loss is transformed into a saga of hope and restoration. He learns that what is lost can be found, that ruin can lead to revelation. Without this second half, the central allegory of Freemasonry remains a beautiful but ultimately sorrowful tale of incompleteness.

2. The Recovery of the Central Masonic Secret: From a Substitute to the Genuine Word

- In the Master Mason Degree (**The "Before"**): The Mason is explicitly told that the genuine Word is lost and that he is receiving a substitute "until time or circumstances should restore the former." He becomes a custodian of a known absence. His Masonic knowledge, by its own

definition, is incomplete. He has the beautiful casket, but he knows the original jewel is missing.

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- In the Royal Arch (**The "What He Gets"**): The entire degree is an allegorical journey to find that very jewel. What he gets is the symbolic recovery of the genuine and sacred Name of God. This is not merely learning a new password. It is a profound philosophical shift. The "substitute" represents humanity's limited, fragmented understanding of the Divine. The recovered "true Word" represents a direct, intuitive, and holistic knowledge of God as the eternal, self-existent ground of all Being (**"I Am that I Am"**). He moves from a placeholder truth to the symbolic source of Truth itself, fulfilling the promise made to him as a Master Mason.



3. A Shift from Moral to Spiritual Knowledge: From Building Character to Seeking Communion

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- In the Master Mason Degree (**The "Before"**): The primary focus is on morality, ethics, and fraternity. The working tools (Square, Level, Plumb) are used to build character, to smooth the rough ashlar of the self, and to regulate one's actions with fellow man. It is a brilliant system for creating a good and honourable man. The focus is largely "horizontal", man's relationship to man.
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- In the Royal Arch (**The "What He Gets"**): The focus shifts from the moral to the mystical. The working tools change to the Pickaxe, Crow, and

Shovel, tools not for building, but for *excavating* and *uncovering*. The lessons shift from our duties to others to our direct relationship with the Deity. What he gets is a framework for his personal spiritual quest. The Five Signs are not about fellowship, but about the internal postures of the soul before God: humility, reverence, supplication, and faith. He moves from being a builder of a worldly temple of character to becoming a Sojourner seeking the divine essence within the rubble of his own being. The focus becomes "vertical", man's relationship to God.

4. **The Fulfilment of Masonic Symbolism:** The Keystone That Completes the Arch

- In the Master Mason Degree (**The "Before"**): The Mason is surrounded by rich symbolism, the pillars, the temple, the lights. All of these symbols point toward a central, unifying truth, but that truth remains veiled. The entire structure is an arch that is missing its final, locking stone. It is strong, but incomplete.
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- In the Royal Arch (**The "What He Gets"**): The Royal Arch provides that final, locking piece: the keystone. What he gets is the context that gives all prior symbolism its ultimate meaning. The lights of the Craft Lodge are shown to be preparatory for the fuller light of the Chapter. The Temple of Solomon is understood not just as a glorious achievement but as the site of a profound loss that necessitates a second journey. The very name of the degree, the Royal Arch, is the perfect architectural metaphor. Without the keystone, the arch collapses. Without the Royal Arch degree, the symbolic structure of Freemasonry is philosophically and allegorically unstable. By completing it, the Mason sees how every part of the Craft was perfectly designed to lead him to this final revelation.

In short, a Master Mason completes the step into the Royal Arch to find the answers to the questions posed in the Craft Lodge. It is the journey to move from a state of symbolic ruin to one of divine revelation, thereby completing his personal spiritual temple and becoming, in the fullest sense, a true Master.

(Generated by **Ex.Comp. Nicholas Broadway** (L&D Team) and produced by **AI**)



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