

Why Be a York Rite Mason? Use a timeline to explain.

Using the slide as a visual, you can take Brothers through the York Rite degrees chronologically in their quest for more light.

The following degrees occur during the 7.5 years of King Solomon's Temple construction until its completion around **1000 BCE**. (Dates are estimations unless specified - **bolded**):

- 1008 BCE: The **Entered Apprentice** degree takes us back to the time of building of the Solomon's Temple. In this degree, we learn of the tools we are to use, how the temple is being assembled, and the materials being used and from where they are taken.
- 1006 BCE: The **Fellowcraft** degree takes us further along in the building of the Temple where, as Fellowcrafts, we learn of various rooms and the ornaments of the Temple. We also learn of the importance of education, the wages to be received, and where they will be paid.
- 1004 BCE: In the **Mark Master** degree, we are still building the Temple as Fellowcrafts. It is in this degree that a Brother learns how to carry up his work and how to receive his wages. The Brother also learns the meaning of making his mark and of the work assigned to the Master Architect.
- 1003 BCE: In the **Select Master** degree, as Fellowcrafts we learn how our three Grand Masters are constructing the means to preserve the secrets for future generations. This degree directly connects to the Royal Arch.
- 1000 BCE: The first half of the **Royal Master** degree is where, as Fellowcrafts, we get to personally interact with Master Hiram and learn some invaluable lessons.
- 1000 BCE: The **Master Mason** degree occurs shortly before the completion of the Temple. Every Master Mason knows what happens in this degree. Reflecting on this degree in a historical context, the activities in the Select Master show their true meaning.
- 1000 BCE: The second half of the **Royal Master** occurs right after the tragedy of the Master Architect, but still before the Temple is completed. This degree is in the honor of the Master Architect.
- 999 BCE: The **Most Excellent Master** degree finishes the building of the Temple. It is a truly reverential and inspirational degree that relates the dedication of the Temple and the festivities enjoyed at its completion. This degree reinforces the key lessons of the Master Mason degree while introducing why the Temple was built.
- Note: The **Past Master** degree says that it has no historical connection to the other Capitular Degrees, however, if you do want to give it context it would occur just prior to the dedication of the Temple (999 BCE) after King Solomon's inspection of the Temple.

The next set of degrees occur after the first Temple was destroyed in **586 BCE** but before the second Temple is completed in **516 BCE**.

- **587/586 BCE**: The **Super Excellent Master** degree occurs during the siege of Jerusalem, the destruction of the first Temple, and the carrying away of the Jews to the Babylonian captivity. This degree references events in the Royal Arch and is a bridge to that degree.
- 530 BCE: The **Royal Arch** degree tells the tale of the Jews return from Babylonian captivity to Jerusalem which is in ruins, but is now being rebuilt. The Royal Arch degree connects the candidate to the Royal and Select Master degrees as well as the Master Mason degree. Taken as a whole, some of the most beautiful work in Freemasonry is to be found within this set of degrees (Royal and Select Master, Master Mason, and Royal Arch). The Royal Arch is also one of the most esoteric degrees in Freemasonry.
- **520 BCE**: The **Illustrious Order of the Red Cross** occurs before the second Temple is completed. It deals with the time of King Darius and his promise to aid the Jews in the rebuilding of the

Temple. This order bridges the degrees of Royal Arch and Cryptic Masonry to the Orders of Chivalric Masonry.

This last set of Orders occurs after the second Temple is destroyed by the Romans in **70 CE**.

- **1048 CE:** The **Order of Malta** finds us at the time of that the establishment of this chivalric order, which is dedicated to Saint John the Baptist and tells the story of Paul on the island of Malta. This Order teaches the history of the Maltese Order.
- **1125 CE:** In the **Order of the Temple**, candidates seek admittance to become a Sir Knight of the Knights Templar. As a trial of worthiness, this Order takes place after 7 years of preparation, beginning in pilgrimage and later in warfare. Reminders of He who suffered upon the Cross are impressed upon the mind of the candidate throughout the conferral. This Order ends the timeline of the York Rite degrees.

I would not get into the lessons of the York Rite degrees in your discussion with prospective members to avoid the possibility of divulging any secrets. I would also caution to use this presentation amongst Master Masons only. These all are truly beautiful degrees and Orders that tell an even more beautiful story when taken as a whole. Again, the message for a York Rite mason to convey to Blue Lodge Master Masons is that the York Rite degrees and orders complete the story of the Blue Lodge experience (as shown in the timeline).