



The Cross of Salem

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Salem is an ancient, Middle Eastern town mentioned in the Holy Bible in several passages. It is referenced in Genesis 14:18—"And **Melchizedek** king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God." It is also referenced in Psalms 76:1-3—"In Judah is God known: his name is great in Israel. In Salem also is his tabernacle, and his dwelling place in Zion. There brake he the arrows of the bow, the shield, and the sword, and the battle. Selah." A third reference can be found in the New Testament of the Holy Bible in Hebrews 7:1-2—"For this **Melchizedek**, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him; To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all; first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace; Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually." These scriptures equate Salem with "power" and "peace" which are attributes that are most definitely equated with God. They also identify Melchizedek as the King of Salem, the King of Peace, who is set to represent these attributes as a chief priest of God.

In peace, there is laid a strong foundation upon which a vast array of structures can be organized and built. In order to maintain peace, power and authority are required in order to provide structure and order. As Melchizedek was held accountable for order through the wisdom and guidance of the Most High God, so are the leaders who bear the Cross of Salem emblem. These leaders are situated with the power and authority to maintain peace despite the storms that may cross their paths. As such, it is of critical importance that our leaders be like Melchizedek. As a chief priest, he was worshipful and transformed those instructions into practical actions in the leadership of his people.

The term "worshipful" is a term that should be familiar to all of the bodies within the Masonic diaspora. It does not just apply to the Blue Lodge but it applies to every house. To some it is just a title or style attached to the head of a Lodge. To others, it is a term of action describing the position that the leader of the body should be in. Worship to our heavenly father up above shall yield wisdom and direction which are key components to the substance of good leadership. In the minds of many, these qualities are the substance of things hoped for in all good leaders. The evidence of which was shown in the respect given to Melchizedek during his day and age. Consider that Abraham, father of many nations and devout worshippers to God, gave Melchizedek a tithe. It was Abraham's faith in God that delivered Ishmael and Isaac who would birth many nations. His respect for a chief priest of God speaks, the King of Salem, provides evidence to the works of Melchizedek. (Next Page)

Many scholars consider Melchizedek as a forerunner to Christ. Yet, as there can only be one Melchizedek and one Jesus Christ, the Cross of Salem, the Cross of Peace, is also an ever present reminder of their efforts. As Christ gave Christians the opportunity for everlasting life according to the scriptures, his sacrifice cannot be duplicated. This is the new dispensation. Melchizedek's efforts fell under the old dispensation and the promise changed with the sacrifice of Christ. As such, this may be the likely reason why the emblem is slanted for the leadership of the Scottish Rite. Yet, the power of the Office of Sovereign Grand Commander remains in place and order is maintained through his worshipful state to ensure that peace prevails. So, like Melchizedek, the Grand Commander is as Sovereign over the jurisdiction of the Scottish Rite as Melchizedek was sovereign over Salem and his leadership as directed by the Most High God helps to not only keep that peace but also lay the foundation for future growth.

In etymological terms, the City of Salem and "Jerusalem" hold the same meaning. Jerusalem or "Yerusalem" simply means "city of peace". Scholars, however, have varying opinions on "Salem" and "Jerusalem" as synonymous terms. Other translations refer to "Jerusalem" as "foundation of peace." King David, from the line of Abraham, who was blessed by Melchizedek, became the King of Jerusalem. It is from this bloodline, this foundation which received a blessing at the city of peace, that the Prince of Peace was born. By the hands of our existing leaders, our sovereign commanders, Sovereign Grand Inspectors General, the foundation of peace has led to the extension peace and benevolence through the virtues of Melchizedek and Jesus as expressed through the cardinal virtues of the Masonic Order itself.

The un-slanted cross is used symbolically by faiths to represent the leader in the same religious light as Melchizedek. The Pope's triple roles as leader of worship, teacher, and community leader are represented thusly. It aligns him with St. Peter whose powers and responsibilities were temporal, spiritual, and material. These align with the three theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity. Even though Freemasonry is not a religion, these same three principles are the cornerstone of the order.

The cross, un-slanted, is also used to represent officers of a Grand Commandery of Knights Templar. Templars of old committed themselves to the protection of the Holy Land while Templars of new commit themselves to the protection of the faith. In like manner with the Pope, faith is the key principle which is marked by the emblem in their eyes. As the focus of the Scottish Rite is philosophical yet spiritual, this provides another hint as to why the cross may be slanted for the Sovereign Grand Commander of the Scottish Rite. Despite the final position of the cross for leadership, the messages of power and peace through order ring loudly and clearly which is the key to the emblem itself.

The kingdom of the Northern Jurisdiction of the Scottish Rite of Freemasonry is called the Holy Empire. The king of the Holy Empire is the Sovereign Grand Commander who wields the power granted him by the Constitution and Bylaws of the Northern Jurisdiction in efforts to maintain peace and order and create growth. This kingdom is dedicated to the principles of the Rite which amplifies and elaborates the lessons of the Craft or the cardinal virtues of Freemasonry through Ineffable, Historical, Philosophical, Traditional and Chivalric Degrees. These degrees are grouped and categorized to convey specific objectives and meanings of the virtues of Freemasonry. Developed years ago, they are categorized and organized as follows:

The Lodge of Perfection constitutes the "Ineffable Degrees"

- **4th degree Secret Master.** *The Fourth Degree emphasizes duty, fidelity, integrity, and the necessity for secrecy in all confidential relationships.*
- **5th degree Perfect Master.** *This degree teaches that trustworthiness is more precious than life and is the foundation of Masonic honor. Also, we must pay due respect to the memory of a deceased worthy Brother.*
- **6th degree Intimate Secretary.** *This degree teaches that devotion to one's friends and zealously in performing one's duties are rewarding virtues.*
- **7th degree Provost and Judge.** *This degree teaches us to judge righteously, without respect to person, and that one law and one custom shall apply to all. Let justice be impartial, tempered with deserved mercy.*
- **8th degree Intendant of the Building.** *This degree teaches that each new honor is meant to be a step toward perfection in the moral code.*
- **9th degree Elect of Nine.** *The lessons taught in this degree are that we should be careful not to be too zealous in executing justice, even in a good cause, and that we should avoid injuring or harming any person by hasty or irresponsible action.*
- **10th degree Elect of Fifteen.** *The teachings of this degree are that ambition and jealousy can tempt men to evil deeds, that righteousness will eventually triumph over evil, and that evil doers will be punished.*
- **11th degree Sublime Elect of Twelve.** *This degree dwells on good citizenship. Evil doings should be punished. Honesty and respect for others should be rewarded. Be earnest, honest and sincere.*
- **12th degree Grand Master Architect.** *This degree teaches that the Mason, as he learns to use the tools and instruments of his trade and skill, also learns to contemplate the many aspects of life and deal with them as a child of God, steadily advancing to those heights of experience which we call perfection.*
- **13th degree Master of the Ninth Arch.** *This degree teaches that difficulties and dangers, however great, should not deter the true and faithful brother from progressing onward to perfection. It teaches us to be upright, patient and persevering.*
- **14th degree Grand Elect, Perfect and Sublime Mason.** *In the Scottish Rite, this degree is the summit of Ancient Craft Masonry. As the crowning degree of the Lodge of Perfection, its essence is the holiness of God and reverence for His Holy Name. God will not hold him guiltless that taketh His Name in vain.*

The Chapter of Rose Croix constitutes the “Historical & Philosophical Degrees”

- **15th degree Knights of the East or Sword.** This degree teaches the important lessons of loyalty to conviction and devotion to right.
- **16th degree Prince of Jerusalem.** This degree teaches loyalty to truth and fidelity to duty.
- **17th degree Knight of the East and West.** The lessons of this degree are that loyalty to God is man’s primary allegiance, and the temporal governments not founded upon God and His righteousness will inevitably fall.
- **18th degree Knights of the Rose Croix.** The lessons taught in this degree are that man must have a new Temple in his heart where God is worshipped in spirit and in truth and that he must have a new law of love which all men everywhere may understand and practice. This degree affirms the broad principles of universality and tolerance.

The Consistory constitutes the “Traditional and Chivalric Degrees”

- **19th degree Grand Pontiff.** This degree proclaims the spiritual unity of all who believe in God and cherish the hope of immortality, no matter what religious leader they follow or what creed they profess. It is concerned primarily with the perennial conflict between light and darkness, good and evil, God and Satan.
- **20th degree Grand Master of All Symbolic Lodges; or, Master ad Vitam.** This degree is a drama of the American spirit confronting the challenge of disloyalty and treason. Masonic principles and leadership are subjected to a crucial test. The degree demonstrates the Masonic condemnation of all who conspire against the security of the nation and the happiness of our people.
- **21st degree Noachite or Prussian Knight.** This degree teaches that Freemasonry is not a shield for evil doing and that justice is one of the chief supports of our fraternity.
- **22nd degree Knights of the Royal Axe; or Prince of Libanus.** In this degree, the dignity of labor is demonstrated. It is no curse, but a privilege, for man to be allowed to earn his sustenance by work. Idleness, not labor, is disgraceful.
- **23rd degree Chief of the Tabernacle.** This degree teaches that impure thought and selfish, unworthy ambitions are corrupting and destructive, and that a man who forgets his duty to family, country, and God will be morally and spiritually destroyed
- **24th degree Prince of the Tabernacle.** This degree teaches that a mutual belief in one true, living God should bind men together in the service of humanity and in a worldwide brotherhood
- **25th degree Knight of the Brazen Serpent.** This degree teaches that there are desert stretches in every individual life in the history of every nation, with a resultant breakdown of discipline and loss of faith. This degree is a clarion call to faith-in ourselves, in each other, and in God.

- **26th degree Prince of Mercy.** This degree teaches the quality of mercy; that it is a spirit of compassion and a tenderness of heart which dispose us to overlook injuries and to treat an offender better than he deserves.
- **27th degree Knight Commander of the Temple.** This degree teaches that Scottish Rite Freemasonry believes in the concept of a free church in a free state, each supreme in its own sphere, neither seeking to dominate the other, but cooperating for the common good.
- **28th degree Knight of the Sun.** This degree using the symbolism of the tools and implements of architecture teaches that by building high moral character among its adherents, Freemasonry may advance man’s determined quest for the achievement of unity and good will throughout the world
- **29th degree Knights of St. Andrew.** This degree emphasizes the Masonic teachings of equality and toleration. We are reminded that no one man, no one Church, no one religion, has a monopoly of Truth; that while we must be true and faithful to our own convictions, we must respect the opinions of others.
- **30th degree Knights Kadosh.** This degree portrays the tests and ceremonies that symbolize the experiences we must undergo in the building of character and the sacredness of duty.
- **31st degree Grand Inspector Inquisitor Commander.** This degree reminds us to remember the frailty and imperfection of human nature and that the purpose of punishment is repentance and reformation and not for an eye for eye.
- **32nd degree Sublime Prince of the Royal Secret.** This degree reminds us of the words of the Master: “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.”

Through these degrees, faith, hope and charity. In them, are found the definitions of a good man and good leader. When transformed into practical action, they convert the thoughts of good men into stones that can be utilized to build a strong tower on the foundation of peace. By doing so, they extend the kingdom physically and spiritually and open pathways for future growth.

With leadership comes duty and responsibility. Those who bear the Cross of Salem, whether slanted or not, hold a sacred duty to ensure that the cardinal virtues of the Rite are translated into practical action that can extend the peace and benevolence within the walls of the kingdom. In doing so, peace will prevail within and eventually expand without to newer, broader horizons making the unknown known.

Holy Bible—Genesis 14, Psalms 76, Hebrews 7, Matthew 1
“Degrees of the Scottish Rite”, www.uscnjpha.org, retrieved 1/20/2018
Sharp, Granville, “Jerusalem; or, an answer to the following enquiries: what is the Etymology of the word Jerusalem? and is there any connection between Salem and Jerusalem? etc.”, Richard Edwards Crane Court Fleet Street, 1808, pp. 2-7

