

Ceremony for The Presentation And
Dedication Of A Preceptory Bible



Rutfield Preceptory No 594

Wednesday 9th October 2013

Right Eminent Dedicating Officer, Prov. Sub-Prior, Great Officers, Brother Knights, but most of all the Officers and Members of Nutfield Preceptory No.598, on the Roll of the United Religious, Military and Masonic Orders of the Temple and of St. John of Jerusalem, Palestine, Rhodes and Malta in England and Wales and its Provinces Overseas and in the Province of Surrey, for your generous gift of this beautiful Bible, which we have assembled here to dedicate for the continuing use of this Preceptory and to the glory of God. And in doing so, we remember the Holy Bible it is replacing, which has served this preceptor well since it was consecrated here on 31st May 1997.

There are at least sixty-six separate books in the Bible and up to eighty one if you include the Apocrypha. The first part is the Old Testament, which contains at a minimum, the twenty-four books of the Hebrew Bible divided into thirty-nine books and ordered differently than the Hebrew Bible. The second part is the New Testament, containing twenty-seven books: the four Canonical gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, the Epistles or letters and the Book of Revelation.

It wasn't until the 13 century that the Bible was divided into Chapters by the then Archbishop of Canterbury, Stephen Langton, after whom your mother Preceptory is named. And it wasn't subdivided into verses until the 16th century. Now passages in the Bible are usually cited by book, chapter and verse. So we have a lot for which to thank Stephen Langton.

The Bible in its many versions and translation has estimated annual sales of 25 million copies and has been a major influence on literature and history, especially in the West, where it was the first mass printed book. It has certainly had a large influence within freemasonry, the original writers of our rituals in all the Orders of freemasonry having demonstrated this.

Chronologically in bible history, the Royal Ark Mariner Degree relates to the covenant made between God and Noah at the time of the Great Flood.

The Mark degree tells of the workmen both in the forests of Lebanon and in the quarries preparing material for the construction of King Solomon's Temple in Jerusalem.

The Holy Royal Arch tells the story, after the destruction of the first Temple, when during the preparation for the building of the Second Temple, after the Jews returned from their exile in Babylon, they found the Lost Word.

But it is in this Order with our belief in the Holy Trinity that we find many Bible references used to direct us in our spiritual development. The Preceptory is opened with the Bible open at Chapter 1 of St. John's Gospel, which states '*In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God*' emphasising the relationship between the Bible, Jesus and God himself.

In the Ceremony of Installation, there is the reading from St. Paul's letter to the Church in Ephesus, where we are told to be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might and to put on the whole armour of God that we may stand against the wiles of the devil – gird about with Truth – having on the breastplate of righteousness – our feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of Peace – above all, taking the Shield of Faith wherewith we shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked – and take the Helmet of Salvation – and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God – once again emphasising the value of the Holy Bible in our faith and in our lives.



The two readings which introduce the Casual Sign and the Grand Password are taken from the Old Testament Book of Isaiah referring to the plucking off a hair from the cheek and giving us the words Maher shalal hash baz, the Great Password.

Then we have an additional, but important part of the ceremony, in Surrey, when the Chaplain retires with the Candidate to supervise his period of meditation. Then the candidate stands before the altar and is taken through the meaning of his ceremony so far and is instructed to kneel before the altar in an attitude of prayer and left to meditate on the symbolism and true meaning – the spiritual meaning – of what had happened so far in his endeavour to become a true and active soldier of the Cross and to prepare himself to be admitted into this Christian Order as a Knight Templar and told that may the Lord our Saviour, Jesus Christ, be with him in his meditation. After 2 or 3 minutes he is asked if he is ready to recommence the ceremony.

At the beginning of part 2 of the ceremony a reading is given from the first letter of St. Peter which instructs him to put off fleshly lusts, to submit himself to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake and as the servant of God to Honour all men, Love the Brotherhood, Fear God and Honour the King. Then a reading from the Book of Revelation tells him that *"To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving him that receiveth it"*.

In a similar way we can show the importance of the Holy Bible in the Ritual for the Ancient and Masonic Order of St. John of Jerusalem, Palestine, Rhodes and Malta. The Holy Gospels are opened on the pentagonal table. In the degree of a Knight of St. Paul the reading is taken from the Acts of the Apostles and tells of the shipwreck of St. Paul on the island of Melita and how, in his faith, when he was bitten by a viper he suffered no harm under the protection of God. In the Ceremony of Installation the candidate is taught of the significance of the Birth, Life, Death, Resurrection and Ascension of our Lord and Saviour our Heavenly Captain and Great Emmanuel.

I hope this has demonstrated to you the value of this Holy Bible, not only in a physical sense for its beauty and workmanship, but in a deep spiritual sense, as the Word of God and its relationship to the rituals of our Order.

May this Bible, which you have generously donated to this Preceptory and which is being dedicated by the Dedicating Officer, the Rt. Em. Knight Michael Banbury, the Provincial Prior of this Province of Surrey, be used and treasured by its members from now until time shall be no more and may it lead you ever onward in your journey through life.

*Very Eminent Knight David Allonby, OBE, PStAlm, Provincial Prelate
Nutfield Preceptory, 9th October 2013*

