

# THE SUPREME GRAND ROYAL ARCH CHAPTER OF NEW ZEALAND

## THE EXCELLENT DEGREE

### An Introduction For Those About To Be Acknowledged

Having entered the series of degree that culminate in the Royal Arch Degree in New Zealand you have been Advanced by previously becoming a Mark Man and then a Mark Master Mason are now about to progress further by being Acknowledged to The Excellent Master degree.

Although known in the UK as The Passing of the Veils it is of interest to note that this degree is not often worked in the UK. The degree is colourful and is symbolic of a journey which is perhaps more important than the destination.

In the Excellent Master degree we move ahead in time from the Mark Master Degree, which related to the building of King Solomon's Temple by some 470 years to the time when the descendants of the Jews taken captive into Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar were preparing to return to Jerusalem. In the intervening years the Temple had fallen into disrepair, disuse and had been destroyed as predicted by the prophets because of the Chosen People's deviation from the path dictated by their covenant with God. The Babylonians were the cause of the destruction and they took many of the survivors into captivity in Babylon. In this ceremony you, the candidate, represent a journeyman (i.e. a tradesman—a graduated apprentice) or sojourner (for such the captives considered themselves—one who is temporarily resident) in Babylon, who hopes to take advantage of a decree of the Persian Emperor Cyrus who had defeated the Babylonians and declared that the Jews and others had suffered enough and should be allowed to return home.

A new Grand Lodge was formed in Babylon to ensure the sojourners returning to Jerusalem are fit and proper men and have proved they are well qualified and ready to start the spiritual journey.