THE INVESTIGATOR

(Based on the premise that we must always be in search of knowledge)

Presented by REC. Norman McEvoy Volume 1 Number 1 June 2009

Fraternal Greetings Companions

For the past 6 years I have been creating a monthly educational presentation on Freemasonry and emailing it to an ever growing distribution list.

Based on the apparent success of *"The Educator"* I have decided to expand my research to include Royal Arch Masonry and share the results in the same format.

Looking to the future, I will be guided by the reaction of the audience as to its suitability and value.

To begin, the approach I have decided to take is to examine the foundations on which Royal Arch Masonry is based and thereby assist all of us in understanding the basic story of the rebuilding of the Temple and **WHY** such a thing was necessary to begin with.

This material is taken from **"Freemason's Book of the Royal Arch" by Bernard E. Jones**, and like most history can be quite DRY at times.

TRADITIONAL HISTORY, THE BIBLICAL BACKGROUND

The magnificent Temple built and furnished by King Solomon at stupendous cost of thought, labour, and of treasure was not blessed with long life (covered in Kings 1)

Solomon was surrounded by pagan peoples, and the Jews themselves tended from time to time to fall away into idolatry; indeed, ten of the twelve tribes broke away soon after Solomon's death to form an independent kingdom, which later made the fortified city of Samaria its capital.

The two faithful tribes, Judah and Benjamin, held the mountain stronghold of Jerusalem, which, commanding the great trade route between Syria and Egypt, had brought Solomon both wealth and power; but for some hundreds of years to come the position was a difficult one, for in the long wars between the Assyrians and the Egyptians Palestine was often ravaged from many different points.

In the fifth year of Rehoboam's reign the Egyptians sacked Jerusalem and carried away the gold from the Temple.

Then, in the year 722 B.C., the Kingdom of Samaria fell, Israel became an Assyrian province, and the Ten Tribes were taken captive.

But in Jerusalem itself Hezekiah paid tribute to his conquerors, and was able, to some extent, to restore the Temple worship.

Eighty years later Josiah repaired the Temple, refurnished it, and it was at this time that Hilkiah found the Book of Law in the House of the Lord.

What appeared to be the end both of Jerusalem and of its Temple came in 586 B.C., when, under the orders of Nebuchadnezzer, who was founding his Babylonian empire, Jerusalem was sacked, the Temple treasures were stolen, and the two faithful tribes, Judah and Benjamin, were carried off to Babylon, the only people left in the country of Judea being peasants and others whose enforced duty was to till the land.

In Babylon the Jewish exiles lived in small colonies, and , although they had no temples, they were able to form worshipping congregations which served to keep alive in at least a section of the people their love of Judea and their faith in their God. Their lament is set forth in emotional language in Psalm 137:

By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept when we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof. For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us require of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion. How shall we sing the LORD'S song in a strange land? If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy.

The empire that Nebuchadnezzar had brought together had short shrift when the Medes and Persians came against it. About seventy years after the Jews went into exile Cyrus the Persian conquered Babylon and extended an empire which covered the countries of West Asia, for the next two centuries. Only a few months

after Cyrus had reached Babylon he issued an edict permitting the Jewish exiles to return to Palestine and inviting the two faithful tribes to rebuild the city and the Temple of Jerusalem. His motives in doing so are unknown, but what matters is that he gave the two tribes his protection, supplied them with treasure and materials for carrying out their work, and promised to restore the riches carried off from the Temple some seventy years before.

The invitation was not at first warmly or widely accepted, for most of the Jews, having been born in exile, had never seen Palestine, and it was only a small group that at first availed itself of the permission and made the journey to Palestine. A band of Jewish pioneers under Sheshbazzar returned to Jerusalem in 537 B.C. and started the work. Seventeen years later came a much stronger contingent under Zerubbabel, but the returned exiles were mortified to find that they could occupy only the ruins and immediate vicinity of Jerusalem, for tribes of mixed blood had moved into Judea during the years of exile.