

Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday

T.F.S.

Three, five, and seven

3 5 7

By Ed Halpaus, Grand Lodge Education Officer.
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Dear Masonic Student,

We have a special edition of T.F.S. because I wanted to get the following talk out to you as quickly as I can. This is the text of a talk written by Worshipful Brother Mark Campbell of Cataract Lodge #2 in Minneapolis, MN. Brother Mark is the L.E.O. in his Lodge. He is a very good speaker (past Grand Lodge Orator) and Lodge Education Officer; I have truly said many times that whenever possible I would travel to hear him deliver a talk. He is kind enough to share this with all of us, and especially with Lodge Education Officers in case they would like to use this for a Lodge Education Program to commemorate Martin Luther King Jr. Day; we celebrate it on Monday January 17th, but his actual date of birth is January 15, 1929. When Brother Mark sent me his talk it was in Bookman Old Style font 18 point type – You may want to increase the font to that to make it easier to read in a Lodge Education Program. His actual talk is 1433 words, so it is an easy talk to deliver. If you would like to contact Brother Mark here is his email address:

campbell@tcq.net You may want to know that Brother Mark is the Secretary of the Minneapolis Valley of the Scottish Rite, MN Secretary for the Quatuor Coronati Correspondence Circle, a member of the Philalethes Society, a 33rd degree Scottish Rite Mason, and I suspect he is involved in some other things I'm not aware of; he is a very active and knowledgeable Mason. I'm very pleased he is sharing his talk / paper with us.

Here is part of what Mark sent to me to tell me about his talk: "I was heading into a piece about the history of the Masonic Temple in Memphis - when I was [suddenly] stopped by the error of my thinking. All the reports about the Masonic Temple are in error. So I put together a piece correcting the error."

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By Mark Campbell, L.E.O., - Cataract Lodge #2

Next week we celebrate the birth of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Who was Dr. King and why was he visiting a Masonic Temple the night before he was assassinated?

Martin Luther King, Jr. was born at noon Tuesday, January 15, 1929, at the family home in N.E., Atlanta, Georgia. Martin Luther King, Jr., was the second child and first son born to the Reverend Martin Luther King, Sr., and Alberta Williams King. Dr. King's siblings were Christine King Farris and the late Reverend Alfred Daniel Williams King. Martin Luther King's maternal grandparents were the Reverend Adam Daniel Williams, second pastor of Ebenezer Baptist, and Jenny Parks Williams. His paternal grandparents, James Albert and Delia King, were sharecroppers on a farm in Stockbridge, Georgia.

He married Coretta Scott, younger daughter of Obadiah and Bernice McMurray Scott of Marion, Alabama on June 18, 1953. The marriage ceremony took place

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on the lawn of the Scott's home. The Reverend King, Sr., performed the service, with Mrs. Edythe Bagley, the sister of Mrs. King, maid of honor, and the Reverend A.D. King, the brother of Martin Luther King, Jr., best man.

Martin Luther King, Jr. began his education at the Yonge Street Elementary School in Atlanta, Georgia. Following Yonge School, he was enrolled in David T. Howard Elementary School. He also attended the Atlanta University Laboratory School and Booker T. Washington High School. Because of his high score on the college entrance examinations in his junior year of high school, he advanced to Morehouse College without formal graduation from Booker T. Washington. Having skipped both the ninth and twelfth grades, Dr. King entered Morehouse at the age of fifteen.

In 1948, at the age of 19, he graduated from Morehouse College with a B.A. degree in Sociology. That fall, he entered in Crozer Theological Seminary in Chester, Pennsylvania. While attending Crozer, he also studied at the University of Pennsylvania. He was elected president of his senior class and delivered the valedictory address; he won the Pearl Plafker Award for the most outstanding student; and he received the J. Lewis Crozer fellowship for graduate study at a university of his choice. He was awarded a Bachelor of Divinity degree from Crozer in 1951.

In September of 1951, Martin Luther King began doctoral studies in Systematic Theology at Boston University. He also studied at Harvard University. His dissertation was completed in 1955, and the Ph.D. degree from Boston University, a Doctorate of Philosophy in Systematic Theology, was awarded on June 5, 1955.

We all know of Dr. King's struggles for Civil Rights and his moving oratory. So I won't repeat it here. But the holiday we celebrate in January gives rise to some questions.

In 1968 Dr. King led a parade of protestors in support of striking black sanitation workers. One of the many available stories of that day says King delivered his "I Have Been to the Mountain Top" speech at the "Memphis Masonic Temple in Tennessee" on April 3rd. It would be his last speech. On April 4th, the day after he delivers his historic speech, a sniper killed Dr. King Jr. at the Lorraine Motel in Memphis. King was just 39 years old. Four days after Dr. King's assassination, on April 8th, Michigan Representative John Conyers introduced the first federal legislation to propose King's birthday as a national holiday. James Earl Ray was captured, convicted, and sentenced to 99 years in prison for the murder of Dr. King. Ray later recanted his confession and spent the rest of his life professing his innocence behind bars.

To correct some misunderstanding and end some curiosity, I sought out the history of the "Memphis Masonic Temple" –

Martin Luther King, Jr., delivered his prophetic "Mountaintop" speech in a church in Memphis, Tennessee, on the eve of his assassination--April 3, 1968.

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Mason Temple served as a focal point of civil rights activities in Memphis during the 1950s and 1960s. Mason Temple was built between 1940 and 1945 as the administrative and spiritual center of the Church of God in Christ, the second largest black denomination. The temple is the centerpiece of a group of six buildings that form the church's world headquarters. Mason Temple is a vast concrete building capable of seating 7,500 people on two levels. The temple, designed with simplified Art Moderne styling and detail, was constructed for regular services as well as to house the annual national convention of church representatives.

On the evening of April 3, 1968, Mason Temple had scheduled the Southern Christian Leadership Conference's (SCLC) Rev. Ralph Abernathy, King's associate, as the evening speaker, but when the 3,000 person crowd demanded to hear King, Abernathy phoned King at his room in the Lorraine Hotel and asked him to address the assembly.

King, Abernathy, Andrew Young and other black leaders had come to Memphis to support 1,300 striking sanitation workers who met regularly at the church. Their grievances included unfair working conditions and poor pay. Following a bloody confrontation between marching strikers and police the week before, a court injunction had been issued banning further protests. King hoped their planned march would overturn the court injunction.

Mason Temple is located at 938 Mason Street in Memphis, Tennessee. For more information call 901-578-3800.

Mason Temple or Masonic Temple?

Bishop Charles Harrison Mason was born September 8, 1866 to Jerry and Eliza Mason, near The Prior Farm, outside of Memphis in Shelby County, Tenn. He was the first Chief Apostle and first Senior (*Now referred to as the Presiding Bishop*) Bishop of the Church of God in Christ, Inc. He was also the father-in-law of, the first Presiding Bishop of the Church of God in Christ, Bishop J.O. Patterson, Sr. Bishop Mason was the son of former slaves, Jerry and Eliza Mason. Mason was Founding Bishop of The Church of God In Christ, which was organized in 1897 and is a major Pentecostal assembly with a worldwide membership in excess of six million. Bishop Mason went into eternal rest on November 17, 1961 at the age of 95

Young Mason came from a poor family, worked as a sharecropper and did not receive an early formal education, yet he still learned how to read and write. As a child, Mason was influenced by the religion of his parents and other former slaves. He admired their religious devotion to God (prayer ritual, spontaneous singing, and shouting). When he was twelve, Mason embraced the African-American Baptist faith; he was later baptized and worked in his older brother's church.

He became enamored of the autobiography of Reverend Amanda Smith, an African American Holiness preacher, and began to claim that he had likewise undergone the experience of complete sanctification. Mason also became

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acquainted with Charles Price Jones, a popular Baptist preacher from Mississippi who shared his enthusiasm for holiness teachings. In 1897, Mason and Jones formed a new fellowship of churches Mason called; the Church of God in Christ, a name he said came to him during a vision in Little Rock, Arkansas to distinguish the church from a number of “Church of God” denominations which were forming at that time.

Mason ably directed his fledgling, Memphis-based denomination, commissioning traveling evangelists to spread COGIC’s message, establishing working partnerships with various individuals, and particularly targeting the masses of African Americans headed for work in Northern cities. At the time of Bishop Mason’s death in 1961 COGIC had nearly 400,000 members. Today, it has a membership of nearly 6.7 million members, making it the fourth largest denomination in the United States.

The Mason Temple, built during WWII in 1940, was a benchmark effort for a group of Black Americans. Construction materials, especially steel, were extremely hard to get; nevertheless, the task was completed making it the largest, black-owned church auditorium in America.

This historic church auditorium has been a focal point for many dignitaries including Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. who gave his final “Mountain Top” speech at this pulpit. In 1993, the President of the United States, Bill Clinton, at the 86th National Holy Convocation, gave a most powerful address (known as the “Memphis Speech”). Mason Temple’s main auditorium has a seating capacity of 3,732.

While Ralph Abernathy and Andrew Young were both active Prince Hall Masons, there is no evidence that Dr. King or Bishop Mason were members of the fraternity. So as we approach the holiday and you hear the many media reports of how Dr. King was killed following a speech at the Masonic (sic) Temple – you now know the real story of Mason Temple.

Sources:

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