



The Tau and the Triple Tau

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The Triple Tau is one of the most important symbols of Royal Arch Masonry – but where did it come from, and what does it mean?

The Tau:

© The Tau (T) is the 19th letter of the Greek alphabet. In ancient times it was regarded as the symbol of life, whereas the 8th letter of the Greek alphabet, theta, was considered the symbol of death. Many say that these two symbols created today's plus (+) and minus (-) symbols. The Tau is a very old form of the cross, and is also known as St. Anthony's Cross, after the saint that was martyred on a cross of that shape.

The Hebrew form of the word Tau is pronounced *toṽ*, which means marking, etching or scrawl. In Pagan times, a warrior returning honorably from battle could attach a T to his name. An ancient Royal Arch lecture explains that those acquitted of a crime, or returning unhurt from battle could also use the T as a sign. This custom is also illustrated in the Bible Ezekiel 9:

“.....the man clothed with linen, which had the writer's inkhorn by his side....

Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set Tau upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof”

In other words, the Tau cross was put on men to distinguish those who lamented sin, although newer versions of the Bible have replaced the ancient term “Tau” with “mark.” In imitation of this practice, in the 26th degree of the Scottish Rite, a Tau is put on the candidate's forehead after the candidate has been purified with water on the head, to

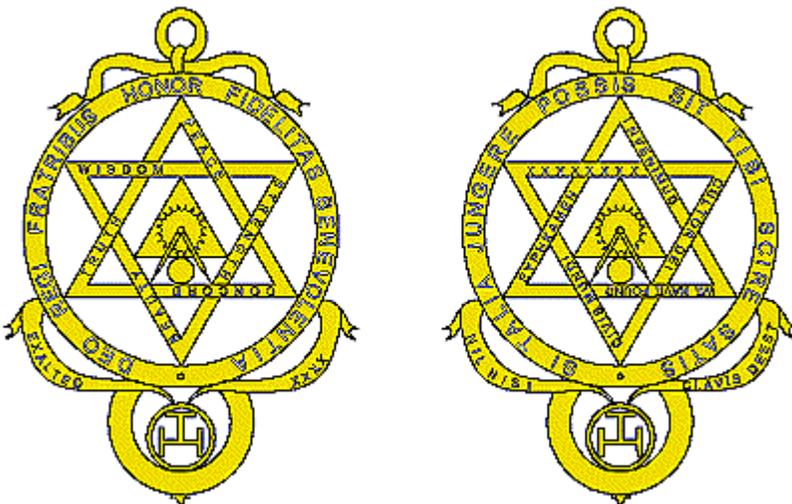
distinguish himself before proceeding.

Triple Tau – Three Taus or T and H?:

It has been said that three Taus come together to form the Triple Tau, . Others say the Triple Tau is originally the coming together of a T and a H, forming , meaning *Templum Hierosolyma*, or the Temple of Jerusalem. Christians interpreted the symbol as “Holiness supporting Trinity”. Royal Arch records dating from 1767 show this symbol. In addition to meaning *Templum Hierosolyma* (The Temple of Jerusalem), it is also said to mean *Clavis ad Thesaurum* - "A key to the treasure" - and *Theca ubi res pretiosa* - "A place where the precious thing is concealed."

The Key becomes apparent in the Jewel:

Freemasons wear jewels not only to denote their status in the respective degrees, but also as each jewel is purported to have special symbolism. The Companion’s jewel, worn by most Royal Arch Masons, is no different. The Triple Tau is an intricate part of the Companion’s jewel as pictured below:



The jewel incorporates the double triangle, also known as the “Seal of Solomon” with the following inscriptions:

“Nil nisi clavis deest” – Nothing is wanting but the key

“Si talia jungere possis sit tibi scire satis” – If thou canst comprehend these things, thou knowest enough

“Invenimus cultor dei civis mundi” – We have found the worship of God, O citizen of the world

“Deo, regi, et fratribus, honor fidelitas, benevolentia” – For God, king, and brethren; honor, fidelity, and benevolence

Significance of Plato and the Jewel:

The studies of Euclid and Plato involved the study of many shapes and forms. In Plato's studies, he and his disciples noticed that the study of the universe involved the study of different volumes, as all that is in this world, from the smallest atoms to the largest items, consisted of volume. When they studied each shape (triangle, square etc) they noticed that only 5 shapes are completely equal no matter from what angle they are viewed. These shapes were subsequently called "The Five Platonic Solids" and were described in detail in his famous works called "The Timaeus." The five solids represented the four base elements of this world (fire, air, water, earth) and the fifth, heaven, represented their all-encompassing universe.

The Five Platonic Solids

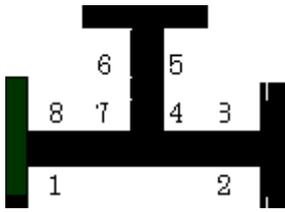
Plato	Volume	Shape of Face	Faces	Edges	Corners	Degrees	Illus.
"Heaven"	Dodecahedron	Pentagon	12	30	20	5040	1
Fire	Tetrahedron	Triangle	4	6	4	720	2
Air	Octahedron	Triangle	8	12	6	1440	3
Earth	Hexahedron	Square	6	12	8	2160	4
Water	Icosahedron	Triangle	20	30	12	3600	5

Mathematicians have long known that these five shapes are the only shapes that can equally divide three-dimensional space, and were the pinnacle of ancient geometric and esoteric knowledge (a sphere also equally divides space, but as it has no faces, edges, corners or degrees, was not considered a solid).

The Seal of Solomon and the five elements:

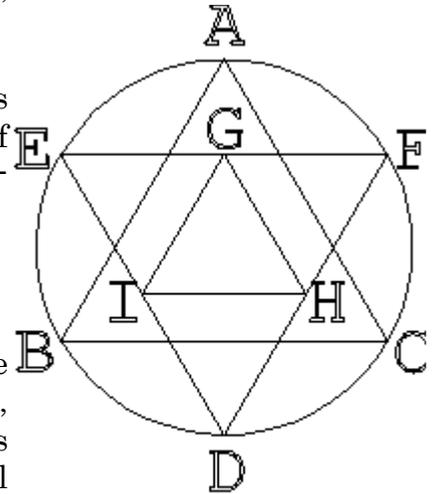
At first glance, one would not see the five Platonic shapes in the Seal of Solomon, but when one looks at the number of angles, the picture becomes clear. It will be found, that the number of angles in the Triple Tau (The key), and a multiple of it, is equal to combinations of the triangles in the Seal of Solomon. Hence the Triple Tau, or key, "unlocks" the Seal of Solomon to reveal the five Platonic shapes!

First, we need to know two pieces of information. Let's first look at the Triple Tau, . We see that there are made up of 8 x 90 degree angles, equal to a value of 720 degrees. (I have numbered these 1 through 8 for easy reference), or 8 right angles, as follows:



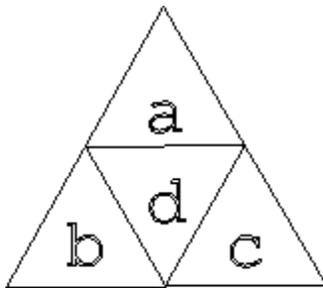
Therefore, the number of degrees in a Tau, Γ , is $8 \times 90 \text{ degrees} = 720 \text{ degrees}$.

Second, we can also observe that the Seal of Solomon, as shown in the Companion's jewel, is actually made up of several triangles, which we can mark as follows: Triangle A-B-C, triangle D-E-F, triangle G-H-I.



Thirdly, we learn from our Royal Arch ritual the following:

“The equilateral or perfect Triangle is an emblem of the three essential attributes of Deity, namely, Omnipresence, Omniscience, and Omnipotence; and as the three equal sides or equal angles form but one triangle, so these three equal attributes constitute but one God”



With this in mind, we can say that one triangle shown in the jewel, is actually made up of three triangles as follows (triangles a, b, and c), which also forms a fourth in the center (triangle d):

Such a triangle, when looked at it from a geometrical value of its angles, is equal to $60 \times 12 = 720$ (because there are 4 triangles, each triangle being equilateral, has three 60 degree angles each)

Combine the Triple Tau and the Key of Solomon:

Now we have all the prerequisites to proceed to reveal the five Platonic shapes embedded in the Companion's jewel with the help of the “Key”, or Triple Tau. You will notice that:

Triangle GHI = $1 \times \Gamma$. Why? We already know that consists of 8 right angles of 90 degrees each. Hence = $8 \times 90 = 720 \text{ degrees}$. Triangle GHI shows 4 equilateral triangles, which we showed above is also equal a geometrical value of 720, which in turn equals the total degrees of a Tetrahedron, symbol of **Fire**.

Triangles ABC DEF = $2 \times \Gamma = 1440 \text{ degrees} =$ the degrees in an Octahedron, which is the emblem of **Air**.

Triangles ABC DEF GHI = $3 \times \Gamma = 2160 \text{ degrees} =$ the degrees in a cube (Hexahedron), which is the emblem of **Earth**.

Triangles DEF is can also be divided into 4 smaller triangles by GHI, add ABC.

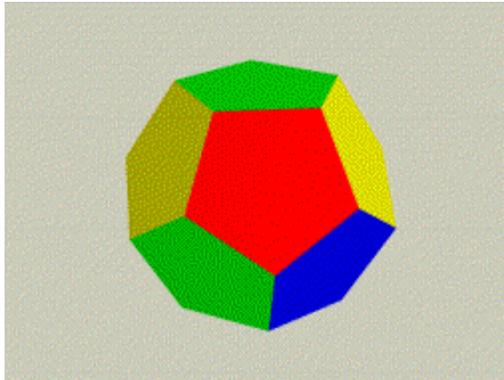
These 5 triangles = $5 \times \text{III} = 3600$ degrees = the degrees in an Icosahedron, which is the emblem of Water.

We have now found the four elements. What remains is the last, "Heaven." We find that the intersection of triangles ABC and DEF, form six smaller triangles around the circumference of the jewel, whose base rests on the central triangle of GHI. As one triangle is 180 degrees, and there are four equal triangles in one (see above), means that one triangle on the circumference is $180 \times 4 = 720$. There are six triangles on the circumference, so $6 \times 720 = 4320$. Add to this the revolving central triangle GHI (720) and you obtain $4320 + 720 = 5040$, which is equal to the degrees of a Dodecahedron, which is the emblem of Heaven.

Conclusions:

Through the III key, the five Platonic solids are revealed in the Royal Arch Companion's jewel. The G.A.O.T.U. created the elements out of the void, without which man cannot exist – reminding each of us of His Omnipotence.

Illustration 1 – The Five Platonic Shapes

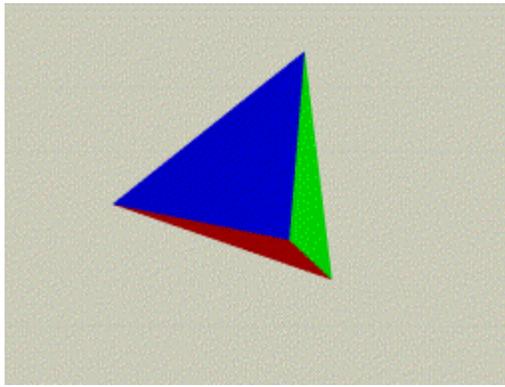


Dodecahedron

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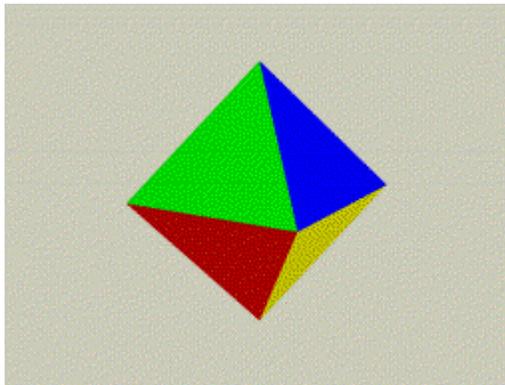
Illustration 2 – The Five Platonic Shapes

Tetrahedron



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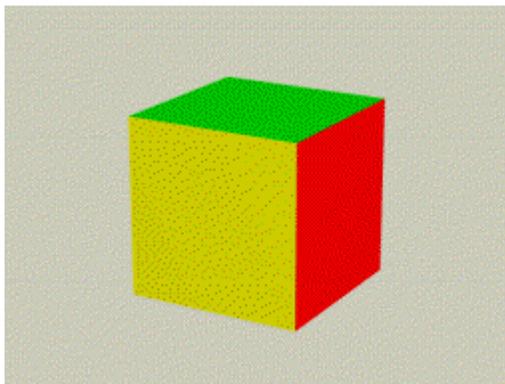
Illustration 3 – The Five Platonic Shapes



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Octahedron

Illustration 4– The Five Platonic Shapes

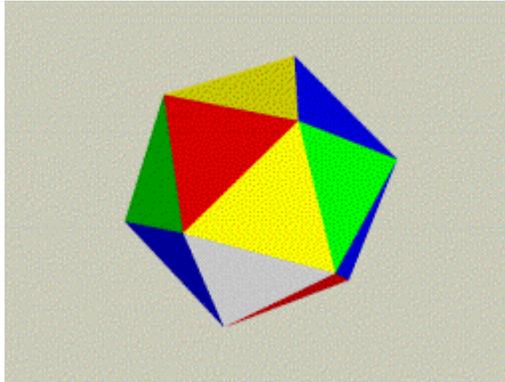


Hexahedron

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Illustration 5 – The Five Platonic Shapes

Icosahedron



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