

DESTINED FOR MARRIAGE

BY THE REV. J. CLARK ECHOLS, JR.

Then they two are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man put asunder (Mark 10:8, 9).

It is your destiny to be married to the perfect spouse. You and another shall complete each other. The harmony of thought and desire shall create a new unity that had not existed in creation before your joining. The union of your will and understanding, desire and thought, inner and outer life, will establish a marriage with your spouse.

It is in our spiritual nature to yearn for relationships. From the time of your earliest memories to this day, as a human being, you are motivated to find fulfillment and completion by sharing who you are and what you have.

This urge has its origin, of course, in our Creator and in the union of Divine Love and Divine Wisdom that exists in our God. And the effort to be joined descends through the levels of creation, even to the matter of the earth. The energy then ascends, and forms a receptacle, the human mind, which completes the circle of life, and allows a joining to the Lord.

The relationships you have with your spouse and the Lord are determined by the way you connect love and wisdom. That is, the quality of your desires, and the thoughts that are connected to them, determine the kind of relationships you have. Here is the core of the New Church teaching. It is not mysterious. It is a powerful tool that the Lord says makes genuine marriage love possible, even though we live in an age as far removed from the golden age as is possible. The tool to achieve a better marriage is,—seek to be honest with yourself about your desires, and look for ways to reject what makes you become selfish or hurtful.

Swedenborg, in the work *Marriage Love*, describes a number of people who reject this tool. That is sad. Perhaps you have a complaint about your own relationships, including marriage with the Lord. That can be depressing. However, in order to give

us hope, the Lord has shown us what marriage is like, from its beginnings to its fullest expression, from its most rudimentary to its most sublime. He wants us to know that everything He is doing for us, in us, through us and in others and through others, is to fulfill our destiny, which is that we will have a perfect marriage in heaven.

Today we read the parable about Adam and Eve. The obvious moral of the story itself supports the notion that a man and a woman are intended to be together. While the initial condition of the garden is a paradise, still, "it is not good that that man should be alone." And the Creator made another human to match the first. The destiny of the joining of the two is further established by the image of the new mate being created from a part of the first, indeed a part closest to his heart, yet he supplies only the framework material, which is then in-filled by the new person's own heart. Even the language tells us about this destiny, as the first created human, for "Ish" calls the new partner "Ish-shah .

Of course, this is not just a literal history. Rather, it tells of the spiritual marriage, first within the individual, then with his God and his spouse. Reading the internal sense of this story enriches your life, your marriage, and your relationship with the Lord, because it allows the Lord to enlighten you about yourself. Your spirit is encouraged and brightened by the hope the Lord has for you; the hope that will motivate any change you make; hope that will delight you on every level of life.

Another powerful description of your destiny to be married is that of Isaac and Rebekah, found in Genesis 24. Now this is not a parable. It actually happened. The moral of the story exists in the literal telling as well as in the spiritual meaning, which makes it even more powerful a tale. It begins when Abraham identifies Isaac's need for a wife, and goes into action. The messenger is led through the desert precisely to the spot, at the precise moment, where Isaac's perfect partner is to be met. Of course, the messenger would have discovered this important and well-known family in a matter of a few days search. However, the beauty of the story is that he does none of the work to achieve success. In fact, the messenger opened himself to

guidance by God by praying that God's will be done. He placed himself into God's service. It was thus even more obvious that this was God's doing; that it was Isaac and Rebekah's destiny to be together.

The story ends with a deeply moving scene, not of Abraham's wish being fulfilled, but with Isaac's. He is alone in the field after a season of very hard work. Perhaps alone still, he is thinking, pining for what is missing in his life. He lifts his eyes and looks, and there, the camels are coming! Rebekah lifts her eyes and she sees Isaac, she gets down off her camel. Their deeply held desire for a partner, directed by the thought of trust in God, buoyed by hope in His destiny for them, gives them the instant recognition of each other, even before they could make out each other's faces.

The spiritual meaning of this story is about how the Lord rearranges our mind so that what we have learned by experience can confirm our love of what is good. As we turn the journey of our life over to the Lord, trusting that He knows best, and hoping in the destiny He provides, then He will use everything we know that is true to give us our heart's desire. All that is not true we will discard. We begin by doing what seems like giving up, even suicide. Nevertheless, we are encouraged along the way, as hard as it will be, as long as it takes. Every day, as we read about ourselves in the Lord's Word, we will find a marker, a milepost, a directional sign, letting us know we are making progress, and headed in the right direction. We are given courage and stamina by the hope that it is our destiny to have integrity of mind and body, desire and thought.

Those are old stories, fables, really. That makes them universal. They describe every person in the world. The New Church thus offers a key to the door upon which the Lord is knocking. In addition, we can offer that key to anyone who tells us that they are on a journey to a better life, and seeking guidance.

There are many challenges from physical world. Some of them seem intractable. Many are very confusing. Our responsibility is not to stand off at some great distance, yell, and scream at people

to “come over this way!” It is not the responsibility of all of us to go over, take their hands, and guide their steps, either. Our responsibility is to be dauntless in our pursuit of our own destiny, singing all along the way, attracting as much attention as we can, responding as the Lord gives us to.

We can confront, individually and corporately, the illnesses of the mind that plague our culture and us. We certainly can climb up and so see farther, overcoming our culture’s shortsightedness. We do that using the Word as our guide, our refuge, our strength, and taking steps in our own journey. We thus welcome others to join us, as they want and are able to. In fact, the Lord will be providing us resources for our journey by that means! Imagine how the Lord will bless us if we see everyone who comes to us, as an enhancement of our lives, and helper fit for us, who will carry some of our load and whose gifts will perfectly complement what we already have by the combining of our talents.

We are living in a new age. The New Jerusalem has descended. A New Church is being established. Conjugal love is possible, because the Lord has opened our hearts and minds to His love and wisdom. This is good news. You can get out of spiritual sleep. You will have a perfect partner. You can get through the desert, and have your thirst quenched at the well of truth by the hand, by the power, of that affection which is the fulfillment of your deepest wish, the fulfillment of your greatest hope. “In a marriage of truly conjugal love, each partner becomes more and more deeply human, for that love opens the deeper aspects of their minds, and as these are opened, a person becomes more and more human” (*Marriage Love* 200). We are then “looking to an everlasting and eternal union with [our spouse] and the growing blessings of that union, which fuel in [us] a hope that continually refreshes [our] minds” (*Marriage Love* 304).

The woman clothed with the sun who appears early in the story of the last judgment and second coming, in the end becomes a Bride for the Lamb, adorned for her husband. The doctrine of the New Church, which has a grandeur that inspires a deep awe, can become in us the beauty of new love, beginning a life that is

destined for the perfect marriage of love and wisdom, desire and thought, spirit and body.

As you yearn for true marriage love, so does every human being on the face of the earth. Alternatively, you, like so many, may not yet be conscious of it. On the other hand, you, like so many, may be in too much pain to feel it. Or you, like so many, may have the urge buried under layers of scar tissue of your own making. But it is there. Let the hope for new life, hope in your destiny to be married, carry you into your own new age, as the Lord prepares you for heaven. Amen

Lessons: Genesis 2:18-25; Mark 10:1-9; Marriage Love 200, 201.

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