

# 10 Things to Look for when Reading the Word

Adapted from an article by the Rt. Rev. W. F. Pendleton

*Looking for the following things can help us pay attention while reading the Old and New Testaments and gain a greater appreciation for the stories of the Word.*

## 1. The idea of God

Note the ideas of God presented—His attributes, such as love, mercy, power, wisdom, *etc.* He creates, He saves, He punishes the evildoer, *etc.*

## 2. Life after death

Note anything that suggests the life after death. For example, Genesis 25:8 shows that Abraham's body was laid in the grave, but Abraham himself went to his people in the other world.

## 3. Time and place

Note whether events occur in the day or night, in the evening or morning, at dawn, at noon, or midnight. Also, note the season of the year. Note also where the events occur, in what country or land, whether on a mountain, on a sea or river, in a house, tent, or ship. These all have important representations.

## 4. Numbers

The numbers used in the Word have great significance. Compare the use of the same number in other passages. Take the number *forty* for example: the flood in Genesis lasted forty days and nights, the Israelites wandered forty years in the wilderness, David reigned over Israel forty years, the Lord was tempted by the devil in the wilderness for forty days. Forty represents temptation.

## 5. The first thing in a series

We learn from *Arcana Coelestia* 8864 that the first thing said by the Lord in a series reigns throughout in what follows. For example, in Genesis 3, the cunning of the serpent is the first thing spoken of; this idea reigns throughout and is the cause of all the results which follow.

## 6. History and geography

Use map to find out where Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Damascus, the Jordan, *etc.* are. There are interesting points of history connected with each of these places.

## 7. The human body

Note references to the body itself, or any of its parts such as the head, arm, leg, hand, foot, heart, lungs, veins. See how these are used. All parts of the human body represent spiritual attributes or states.

## 8. Government and law

Note forms of government in different stories. Look for words which suggest government, as king, ruler, kingdom, reign, dominion, army, host, *etc.* Note the laws, such as those against murder, those providing for cities of refuge, *etc.*, and compare them with laws now.

## 9. Feelings or affections

Everything in the Word comes from some affection. Ishmael's mocking, Esau's bitter cry on losing the blessing, the groaning of the Israelites in bondage and the Lord hearing their cry—all indicate contempt, grief or mercy. The Writings for the New Church frequently calls attention to the affection in the words.

## 10. Compare similar words and passages.

This is important and useful in aiding understanding. Often the same idea is stated in two or more different ways. These can give emphasis to important teachings.