

A The principle of first mention.

- ❖ Every learning course begins with a first lesson. It typically outlines the principles that will underpin the subject matter.
- ❖ In the Bible, we find this "first lesson" in Genesis. There, many key words appear for the first time, helping us understand the Plan of Salvation throughout the rest of the Bible.
- ❖ God does not change (Mal. 3:6a; Heb. 13:8.) His Word does not change (Isa. 40:8.) Therefore, there are no contradictions in the Bible. The plan of salvation is explained in it little by little, until it is fully understood—or at least, to the understanding we need of it now. (2 Pet. 1:19)
- ❖ We can better understand Jesus, and what he has done for us, through the first mention, in Genesis, of some key words: LOVE, LAMB, DEATH, and SERPENT.

B Genesis 22: Love and the Lamb.

- ❖ **“whom you LOVE”**
 - The first biblical mention of love refers to the relationship between a father and his son: Abraham and Isaac (Gen. 22:2.) At first glance, the context seems daunting: Abraham was supposed to sacrifice his beloved son! (Don't worry, he didn't end up doing it.)
 - Compare this mention with the first mention of love we find in the synoptic gospels: “This [Jesus] is my beloved Son” (Mt. 3:17; Mk. 1:11; Lk. 3:22.)
 - And don't miss the first mention in John's gospel (Jn. 3:16.) Abraham's act of sacrificing his son illustrates how God loved us to the point of sacrificing his own Son so that we might live eternally.
- ❖ **“where is the LAMB?”**
 - The first mention of the word LAMB is not accidental (Gen. 22:7.) It is the basis for understanding the repeated mention of the Lamb in Revelation (Rev. 5:6.)
 - Note that the lamb God provided was actually a ram (Gen. 22:8, 13.) At Passover, a lamb was sacrificed, although it could be either a lamb or a young goat (Ex. 12:3, 5.) That is, the word “lamb” came to mean the ultimate sacrifice. Gradually, the Bible expands the symbolic meaning of the lamb:
 - (1) He prevented the death of the firstborn (Ex. 12:13)
 - (2) It was an offering that God always had in mind (Ex. 29:38-41)
 - (3) I had to die for my sins (Is. 53:6-8)
 - (4) John the Baptist identified the Lamb (Jn. 1:29)
 - It's no wonder Revelation doesn't explain the identity of the Lamb. The Lamb is Jesus, who was sacrificed for my sins and who always intercedes for me with the Father (Heb. 7:25.)

C Genesis 2-3: Death and the Serpent.

- ❖ **“you will certainly DIE”**
 - God was the first to mention death (Gen. 2:17.) But death could only exist as a consequence of sin (Rom. 5:12.)
 - Death is often associated with old age. But the first recorded death was that of a young man: Abel (Gen. 4:8.) He, though a righteous man, died at the hands of an unrighteous man (Heb. 11:4; 1 Jn. 3:12.)
 - History was repeated centuries later, when the Righteous One died at the hands of the unrighteous (Mark 15:14.) Unlike Abel, Jesus—who could have prevented his death—allowed himself to be killed (Eph. 5:2.)
 - Jesus did what Abel could not: he conquered death (Rom. 6:9.) And, as Revelation 1:18 shows, he received “the keys of death,” with which he could open the tombs (“hell” or “Hades.”)
- ❖ **“the SERPENT was more crafty”**
 - Revelation presents a dragon (Rev. 12:3-4.) It also tells us that this dragon is a symbol of Satan (Rev. 12:9.)
 - In identifying the symbol of the dragon, he adds a new symbol: Satan is “the ancient serpent.” Which serpent is he referring to?
 - Of course, the first serpent mentioned in the Bible (Gen. 3:1.) In Eden, Satan (the serpent) deceived the whole world (i.e., Adam and Eve.)
 - In Revelation, we are reminded that this has been his purpose throughout history, and that it will be his special target at the end of time (Rev. 13:14.) He will even attempt to deceive everyone in the very presence of God (Rev. 20:8.)
 - How can we defend ourselves against his tricks? One way is to study how he first did it. His basic tactics haven't changed over the centuries.