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history of Egypt. Now if you start reading the Bible and you only get this far and stop you might think that the Bible was like a book of Aesop's fables, a book which has animals talking all the time and all that sort of queer, grotesque things. The serpent is more subtle than any beast of the field, and the serpent says to the woman, and the woman answers the serpent. Is the Bible a book of Aesop's fables? A book of animals talking and doing things and acting as if they were people? How many other animals in the Bible talked? Balaam's ass is the only other instance that I can think of where an animal talked in the Bible, and so there is an instance where^{if} you take something at the beginning of it and think the whole book is like it you get an utterly false picture. Somebody spoke to me yesterday about the law of first occurrence, and I think that is a very important law. The law of first occurrence is that the first time you come to something in the Bible you take that thing and you hunt through the rest of the Bible to see what there is to throw light on it in order to understand it correctly-- the law of first occurrence. Now in this case the first occurrence here is that a snake is talking and you look through the rest of the Bible and you have no other instance where a snake talks, and you have one other instance where an animal talks and that is Balaam's ass and when Balaam's ass talks the only way it does it is because God opens the mouth of the ass, and the angel of the Lord causes the ass to speak and, although speaking in the first person as if it was the ass that was talking, it is very clear that it is God using the ass to try to convey a message to the mind of Balaam. God is using the animal for His purpose. The Bible does not teach that animals have the sort of intelligence that will enable them to enter into converse with human beings and discuss problems with them, and so if that is what we find with Balaam's ass it is altogether reasonable to ask the question, "Is it also the case with the first occurrence here of it, where we have the serpent talking? Is it reasonable to think that the serpent