

ness and beauty of expression are greatly increased, but no obscurity is introduced. There is no difficulty in deciding what is literal and what is figurative.

A similar figure is used in Ezek 31:3:

"Behold, the Assyrian was a cedar in Lebanon with fair branches."

Most of the words in any meaningful passage must be literal. In interpreting prophecy it is a safe rule to consider the literal meaning first and see whether it gives a clear idea, or whether a figurative interpretation of one or more words might convey a better sense. In the latter case it is always well to look for uses of a similar figure elsewhere in the Scripture as a precautionary measure against misinterpretation. Yet one should not assume that a particular figure will always be used in the same way. Interpretation of figures sometimes requires careful study.

The term "spiritualization" is sometimes used to mean interpreting a passage in such a way that everything in it is taken figuratively. There is really nothing "spiritual" about such an approach. Usually its result is to cause a