

Prophets 18

said at the beginning of the year, "Is there anyone here that takes the Bible literally?" And of course, most did, so he said, "Well, what about the Old Testament? Do you take the Old Testament literally?" and we said, "Yes". "Well", he said, "When it says that they went into a land flowing with milk and honey, does that mean with milk and honey flowing down the streets of Jerusalem?" The person would say "No". "Well then you don't take the Old Testament literally, do you? All right. Brush the Old Testament aside. We won't worry about that any more. But," he said, "maybe there's somebody here that doesn't take the Old Testament literally but takes the New Testament literally." Somebody would say, Yes they do. "All right," he'd say, "How about this statement. Christ said about Herod, 'Go tell that fox.' Did Christ think Herod was a fourfooted beast?" "No." "Then you don't take the New Testament literally either, do you?" All right, they didn't. "So now we've brushed the Bible aside, we can go on in our human speculations, human philosophy and explain the universe." He didn't say it in those words but that was what he did. He had brushed the Bible aside as a source of authority. Now of course when you say the man was a lion in the fight you are making a definite, specific statement, the meaning of which is perfectly clear to us. It is a figurative statement but it is absolutely clear what you meant. When you say, "Go tell that fox," we know exactly what you meant. It is just as exact, and just as clear and just as precise and a great deal more beautiful than literal language. Figurative language doesn't mean language which is simply unintelligible. It doesn't mean that at all, but it means language in which figures of speech are used and it may require a more careful study to know exactly what they mean, than in the case of strictly literal language. It may require it and it may not, but if we're going to interpret correctly we always must ask this question, "What part is literal and what part is figurative?" And when we come to the statements we must be prepared to draw a conclusion on the matter. Now if we turn to Jeremiah, we will find in Jeremiah 51 a combination of statements which are an illustration of this problem. Jeremiah 51, verse 42. We find there that the prophet says,