

to say that that's figurative expression, is no reason to do away with a clear teaching. But the teaching may be clearer taking it as figurative than taking it as literal. Now in this case then he gave a prediction for the distant future which was fulfilled three hundred years later. Then he gave another prediction which he didn't say when but it might be much nearer and we found that it was within a few minutes. Then the Lord caused a terrible thing to happen to the king who was trying to interfere with it. So the king took these two things as a sign, an evidence, that this man was really speaking for God, that this man was going to have an influence with the people, that this was a man he should conciliate rather than to try to destroy him. So we read that the altar was rent and the ashes poured forth from the altar. It is possible, if your conception of God is that, ~~that~~ to think that God in the heavens saw that ~~that~~ in the earth there was an altar here that would be rent and therefore that simply sent a thunderbolt, that he struck down ~~where~~^{with} the mighty supernatural act and caused that rock to split apart and the ashes to burst out. It is entirely possible to think that that is what happened here. But it is equally possible to think here that God knowing the end from the beginning had arranged the circumstances in such a way that ~~that~~ the heat would effect this rock in just the right proportion just at this instant at the time when it was needed in God's plan, that the stress and strain in the rock would be the greatest. That is equally possible and you can think of it either way. Personally, the one as God who has planned and arranged everything and uses the forces which he has created to produce a result that he desires fits in much better to me with the character than the idea that all of a sudden he sees that it isn't quite adequate that ~~he~~ needs a change and he introduces a new creative act right at this instant. He could do it perfectly well if he chose. There's no statement that He did; there's no reason ~~that~~ why the Bible ~~says~~ insist that He did such a thing. It fits better with my idea of His wisdom and the care of His planning to think that he arranged for it in advance to occur at that time and that he used natural