The literal use of language is the usage of words as defined in the dictionary; the ordinary, matter-of-fact, everyday usage of words in a strict, scientific sense. in accordance with this usage, when we say "wolf", we mean a four-legged animal of the dog-like family; and when we speak of a 'leopard' or a 'lion' we mean four-legged animals of the cat family; and when we talk about lambs and goats and cows and calves and oxen and snakes we mean those animals and not something else. This is the language of science, of scientific history, and of every realm in which preciseness and clarity is desirable. It is clear, unambiguous, factual language.

The figurative use of language, on the other hand, is the uncommon, unusual, imaginative, or even novel usage of words, to vividly sharpen a mental image and/or to call forth a certain emotional response.

Both uses of language attempt to communicate information <u>literally</u>. That is, even figures of speech are used to convey <u>literal meaning</u>. Thus if someone says, "Oh, but that's just a figure of speech," the question still remains, "Yes, but what does the figure represent, what does it mean?"

RULE: A FIGURE OF SPEECH IS ALWAYS A FIGURE FOR SOMETHING LITERAL (although not necessarily real).

Throughout all categories of literature, including Scripture, figures of speech abound. There are thousands of figures of speech in the Bible; and persons who do not take account of this fact frequently make the Bible say all sorts of erroneous, strange, and even heretical things.

Throughout the Old Testament there are many figures, especially in the poetical books. The one probably mentioned most frequently is that found in Isaiah 55:12 -- "The mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands." In the New Testament there are also many figures. The classic instance in this section of Scripture is found in Luke 13:31-32 -- "The same day there came certain of the Pharisees, saying unto him, Get thee out, and depart from here; for Herod will kill thee. And he said unto them, Go ye, tell that fox, Behold, I cast out demons, and I do cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I shall have finished."

Thus we find both the literal and the figurative use of language employed in the Special Revelation that God intended should be a meaningful, significant communication of truth to us. And therefore we can even speak of figures as revelation, since they always convey literal truth.

2.   Historical and symbolical uses of persons, objects, or actions

Many time in Scripture persons, objects, or actions are used in the simple historical sense. There is no intended meaning beyond them. On the other hand we sometimes discover certain persons, objects, or actions that have symbolic significance. These fall into two categories: symbols and types.

    a.   A <u>symbol</u> is a person, object, or action that is a sign for something beyond itself.