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Dear Associates and Friends,

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The ASK article this month, "[Isaiah, Part 4](#)," continues the study of the Book of Isaiah presented by Dr. Ernest L. Martin in audiotape lectures from 1998. In this article Dr. Martin discusses basic methods of exposition used by Isaiah and even how they were used and expanded by Jesus. Isaiah is well known for having many different types of literary styles of expression. This is not done to be clever or to trick the audience. The ultimate purpose is clarity and to enhance the understanding of the audience.

***“Literary Form. [Isaiah] contains a multitude of individual literary types, often woven together in a highly artistic and rhetorically effective manner. Among the more common forms are the judgment speech (where the prophet accuses the nation of wrongdoing and announces its coming doom), the exhortation to repentance, the salvation announcement (which promises God’s intervention for His suffering people), and the salvation oracle (in which the Lord encourages His people not to fear). Other forms include the disputation speech (where God responds to an accusation or complaint by His people) and the trial speech (where God argues His case with Israel or with the pagan nations). The book contains prophetic messages, mostly in poetic form characterized by parallelism of thought and vivid imagery, and biographical material about Isaiah.”<sup>1</sup>***

• ***Robert Chisholm, “The Major Prophets”***

Misunderstanding of the texts of Isaiah and other prophets does not occur because the words are obscure or have hidden meanings or require some special understanding. They are plain words used commonly in everyday speech. Yes, Isaiah is a sophisticated writer. The true reason that a full understanding of the text is not possible at this time is because God does not allow us to understand them fully. Note how Isaiah alternates between his present day and the future in Isaiah chapter 29. God actively blinds Israel’s understanding:

***“For YHWH has poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep, and has closed your eyes: the prophets and your rulers, the seers has he [God] covered. And the vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one that is learned, saying, ‘Read this, I pray you’: and he says, ‘I cannot; for it is sealed’: And the book is delivered to him that is not learned, saying, ‘Read this, I pray you: and he says, I am not learned.”***

• ***Isaiah 29:10–12***

God is in total control. Yet in a day future to Isaiah (and still future to us), God will intervene and change Israel’s understanding about His written word and about their attitude toward God and His Messiah:

***“... for shall the work say of him that made it, He made me not? or shall the thing framed say of him that framed it, He had no understanding? Is it not yet a very little while, and Lebanon shall be turned into a fruitful field, and the fruitful field shall be esteemed as a forest? And in that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity, and out of darkness.”***

• ***Isaiah 29:16–18***

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<sup>1</sup> Robert B. Chisholm, “The Major Prophets,” in *Holman Concise Bible Commentary: Simple, Straightforward Commentary on Every Book of the Bible*, ed. David S. Dockery (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1998), p. 262.

In this month's article Dr. Martin discusses a literary form called a chiasmus. Here is more on that subject:

**“CHIASMUS. A literary device in which words or ideas are listed first in serial order and then in reverse order, thus:**

**A B C // C<sup>1</sup> B<sup>1</sup> A<sup>1</sup>**

**Chiasmus, an arresting form of repetition, serves to emphasize the content. In Jeremiah chiasmus occurs in 11:18–20; 12:1–3; 14:7–9; 15:15–21. An example of chiasmus is Isaiah 6:10 (RSV):**

**A Make the heart of this people fat  
 B and their ears heavy  
 C and shut their eyes;  
 C<sup>1</sup> Lest they see with their eyes  
 B<sup>1</sup> and hear with their ears  
 A<sup>1</sup> and understand with their hearts  
 and turn and be healed. ”<sup>2</sup>**

The apostle Paul discusses this situation with regard to both Israel (Romans 11:25) and the Gentiles (Ephesians 4:18) in his day. In Second Corinthians he mentions the veil over the eyes of Israel:

**“But their minds were blinded: for until this day remains the same veil untaken away in the reading of the old testament; which veil is done away in Christ. But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart. Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away.”**

**• 2 Corinthians 3:14–16**

That veil is still in place today (Romans 10:2–3). God speed the day when it is removed and Israel takes its rightful place to teach the world about God, as a kingdom of priests (Exodus 19:6; Zechariah 8:13–23).

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### ***Thank You***

When you think about it, the entire story arc of the Bible begins from creation in Genesis to the consummation of the plan of God in glory. It begins with failure and degeneration when man is left to his own devices, and ends in salvation, when God cleanses and saves every human being and calls them a child of God to be presented before Him, washed free from sins by His firstborn son Jesus Christ.

You give us the opportunity to teach that exciting story arc to you and to others. You make it possible to keep the ASK website operating and to publish material that is sorely needed in the world.

Thank you for giving us the means to do what God wants us to do (all for your benefit), to teach the fullness of the Gospel of God. We cherish your communications to us. We greatly desire your prayers on our behalf and on behalf of others of the *ekklesia* of God. We are grateful to God and to you for your financial support.

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<sup>2</sup> E.A. Martens, *Jeremiah, Believers Church Bible Commentary* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1986), pp. 292–93.